

104TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 125

Honoring the contributions of Father Joseph Damien de Veuster for his service to humanity, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 25 (legislative day, MAY 15), 1995

Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. INOUE, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SIMON, Mr. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. LEAHY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Honoring the contributions of Father Joseph Damien de Veuster for his service to humanity, and for other purposes.

Whereas Father Joseph Damien de Veuster was born in Tremeloo, Belgium, on January 3, 1840;

Whereas Father Damien entered the Sacred Hearts Order at Louvain, Belgium, as a postulant in January 1859 and took his final vows in Paris on October 7, 1860;

Whereas, after arriving in Honolulu on March 19, 1864, to join the Sacred Hearts Mission in Hawaii, Father Damien was ordained to the priesthood in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace on May 21, 1864;

Whereas Father Damien was sent to the Puna, Kohala, and Hamakua districts on the island of Hawaii, where Father

Damien served people in isolated communities for 9 years;

Whereas the alarming spread of Hansen's disease, also known as leprosy, for which there was no known cure, prompted the Hawaiian Legislature to pass an Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy in 1865;

Whereas the Act required segregating those afflicted with leprosy to the isolated peninsula of Kalaupapa, Molokai, where those afflicted by leprosy were virtually imprisoned by steep cliffs and open seas;

Whereas those afflicted by leprosy were forced to separate from their families, had meager medical care and supplies, and had poor living and social conditions;

Whereas in July 1872, Father Damien wrote to the Father General that many of his parishioners had been sent to the settlement on Molokai and lamented that he should join them;

Whereas on May 12, 1873, Father Damien petitioned Bishop Maigret, having received a request earlier for a resident priest at Kalaupapa, to allow Father Damien to stay on Molokai and devote his life to leprosy patients;

Whereas for 16 years, from 1873 to 1889, Father Damien labored to bring material and spiritual comfort to the leprosy patients of Kalaupapa, building chapels, water cisterns, and boys and girls homes;

Whereas on April 15, 1889, at the age of 49, Father Damien died of leprosy contracted a few years earlier;

Whereas the Roman Catholic Church began the consideration of beatification of Father Damien in February 1955, and Father Damien will be beatified on June 4, 1995, by Pope John Paul II in Brussels, Belgium;

Whereas Father Damien was selected by the State of Hawaii in 1965 as one of the distinguished citizens of the State whose statue would be installed in Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol;

Whereas the life of Father Damien continues to be a profound example of selfless devotion to others and remains an inspiration for all mankind;

Whereas common use of sulfone drugs in the 1940's removed the dreaded sentence of disfigurement and death imposed by leprosy, and the 1969 repeal of the isolation law allowed greater mobility for former Hansen's disease patients;

Whereas in the mid-1970's, the community of former leprosy patients at Molokai recommended the establishment of a United States National Park at Kalaupapa, out of a strong sense of stewardship of the legacy left by Father Damien and the rich history of Kalaupapa;

Whereas the Kalaupapa National Historical Park was established in 1980 with a provision that former Hansen's disease patients may remain in the park as long as they wish; and

Whereas the remaining patients at Kalaupapa, many of whom were exiled as children or young adults and who have endured immeasurable hardships and untold sorrows, are a special legacy for America, exemplifying the dignity and strength of the human spirit: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the Senate of the United States recog-
- 2 nizes Father Damien for his service to humanity and takes
- 3 this occasion to—

- 1 (1) celebrate achievements of modern medicine
- 2 in combating the once-dreaded leprosy disease;
- 3 (2) remember that victims of leprosy still suffer
- 4 social banishment in many parts of the world; and
- 5 (3) honor the people of Kalaupapa as a living
- 6 American legacy of human spirit and dignity.

